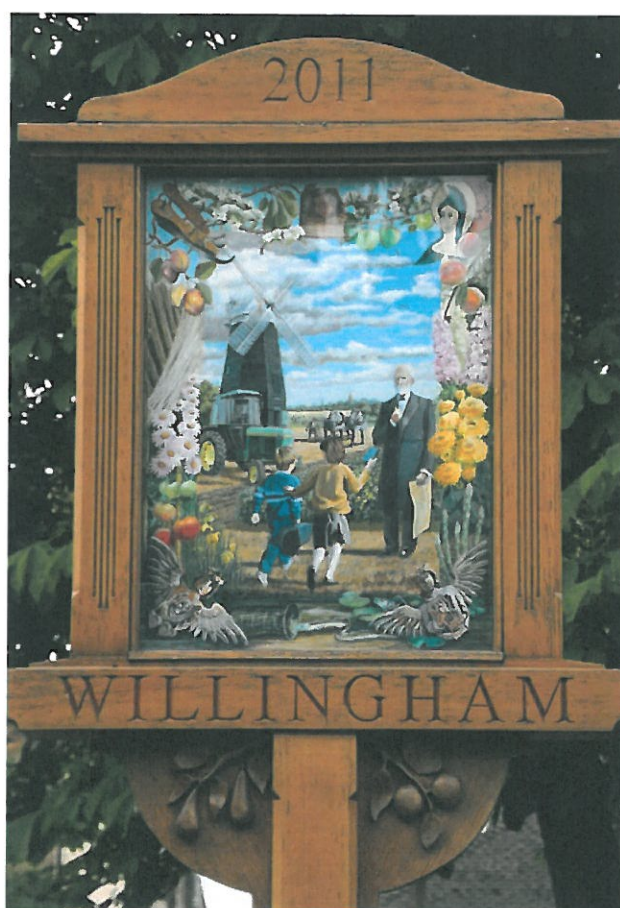
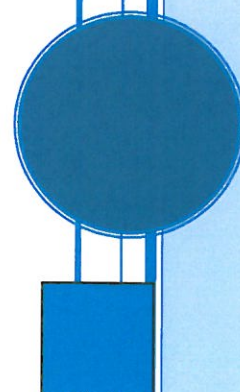


WILLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

2014 - 2015



1ST May 2015



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Staffing

Mandy Powell continues to excel in the position of Parish Clerk ably assisted by Sarah Rutherford our Responsible Financial Officer, and Halina Szulakowska our Admin Assistant. Our litter picker Mark Mumford can be seen regularly cleaning up the central part of the village, Recreation Ground and Play Area. The volume of rubbish Mark picks is astonishing to those of us who do not habitually throw anything we are done with to the ground !!! If only some



residents were a little tidier, then we would be able to afford to cover more of the village.

The office continues to be open each weekday morning from 10.00 – 13.00 except when it is not possible to do so due to staff holidays or sickness.

Councillors

Unfortunately, Bill Kirkman felt he was unable to continue as a Cllr due to ill health, and Hazra Awal has resigned due to leaving the village, and David Jacques for personal reasons. In the past year we have had only one volunteer and welcome the return of Joanna Vincent-Pilsworth to the Council.

We now have four vacancies resulting in the workload falling on fewer shoulders. Can I urge a few Community spirited residents to contact the Clerk in regard to applying to be co-opted onto the Council.

Members of the Council continue to actively participate in meetings, supervise the ongoing care of our community buildings and recreation areas, lock and unlock the Ploughman Hall and respond to our intruder alarms 24/7.

Participation

I would wish to remind members of the public that all parishioners who are on the voting register, plus any residents under the age of 18 have an opportunity to address the Council at the commencement of our monthly meeting. These are usually held on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm in the Octagon. It would be nice to see a few different faces.

The work of the Council

We continue to provide and maintain the Ploughman Hall, the Public Hall, the Recreation Ground, Children's play area, Cemetery, village green and Pavilion, financially support the Originalz youth club, Over Day Centre, the village magazine and a number of smaller charities. Comment on every planning application involving our village, and generally lobby both District and County Councils on the villages' behalf.

Notable Achievements

There are times when residents could be forgiven for thinking that the Council is always "about to". It's an unfortunate fact that many projects take far longer than is initially anticipated. Last year I reported that we had engaged a contractor to convert the Ploughman Hall storerooms into a dedicated Youth facility. Little did we realise that there were defects in the original construction of the hall, and the project would grind to a halt at a very early stage whilst the structural engineer reworked the plans for the upper floor. Finally, we were able to hold a well attended official opening in January and initial reports are that the youth club is flourishing in its new home.

In a similar pattern, I reported last year that we had just reached agreement to purchase the former travellers site in Meadow Road from the County Council, little did I realise we would firstly wait for months to receive the lease document and then once we had signed hear nothing at all from the County Council for over three months. The result of this was that we missed the opportunity to clear the site in the Autumn of 2014 and the tree planting scheme had to be altered as a result. Fortunately Gallagher Developments were able to honour their previous commitment to remove the hard-standings and are presently doing so. The volume of material being removed is quite staggering resulting in a vastly increased vehicle movements through the village, I'm sure however that this inconvenience is justified in achieving the permanent removal of this development. I would like to thank them very much for their most generous contribution to our community. My only regret with this project is that over £50,000 of Willingham Parish Funds have had to be spent to right this blot on the landscape that was entirely the fault of the County Council in its conception, operation and subsequent abandonment.

It is now around 4 years since the Council decided that it was no longer viable to let the Old Recreation Ground for agricultural use and to pursue some form of long term environmental use. If it had been left to the Council, we would of course have planted trees, but never with such vision and effort as Graham Mumby and his team. I would urge you to visit the Community Orchard to see for yourself their efforts

On April 8th the Council gave the go ahead for the initial phase of the new play equipment in the Queen Elizabeth II Field. This will deliver around 2/3 of the planned scheme. We continue to pursue grants to enable us to complete the entire project. WPC met with the contractors recently who anticipate commencement of the build in Mid May and completion in Mid June. A big thank you to everyone involved in this project, especially those involved with the highly successful Its a Knockout tournament. The sum of over £9k raised was crucial in demonstrating community involvement to the organisations providing us with more than £60k in grants.

Finances

As a result of our achievements, the overall sum held by the Council has decreased, and will do so further when the play equipment is paid for. At this point, the only sizeable sum left will be the amount set aside for the purchase of a new cemetery

Once again we have made a small increase to our precept, whilst Parish Councils have not to date been "capped" by central Government giving us the ability to impose any increase that we deem necessary, WPC has felt that at a time when finances are strained it is our duty to keep increases below the 2% limit for larger authorities.

Other Matters

I wrote last year that the saga of the B1050 continues, in the past 12 months, despite regular prompting, there has been no progress at all. Having previously informed us of its imminent collapse, need for urgent £m + repairs etc, the County Council appear to be in total denial over the whole matter.

Cllr Peter Hudson was elected as our representative on the County Council in May 2014. He has been a regular attender at our meetings, and has enthusiastically fought our corner on a number of issues. Thank you.

The build of Northstowe has now commenced, it is a regret that we were unable to get across the message that the traffic from both the build and occupation of this would severely affect Willingham.

Lastly, It's time for thanks, to the staff of the Council, fellow Cllrs, and my own family and staff who have supported me during my Chairmanship. Now however after more than four years in post I feel it is time to step aside and give someone else the opportunity to lead Willingham forward

Andrew Cook - Chairman

LEAD COUNCILLOR REPORTS

GREEN AND BOUNDARIES



The lease for the Meadow Road site has been purchased from the County Council and I am pleased to report that work has been undertaken to clear the concrete hard standings. Once cleared the site will be turned into a woodland for the benefit of the local community. Many thanks to Graham Mumby and Willingham Action Group who once the clearance is complete will start the tree planting to transform the site.

The Community Orchard On Earith Road. Over the last year this site has been transformed into a community orchard and again many thanks to Willingham Action Group and the many volunteers who planted and sponsored the trees. I am sure this will be a facility the residents of Willingham will use and enjoy for many years to come.

The Village Green was decorated with the annual Christmas lights and thanks must go to Geoff Pake for kindly putting them up and taking them down

A survey has been completed of the entire village regarding litter and dog waste bins following the installation of the new street light. Unfortunately a number of these were taken away with the old posts and not replaced. As a result the Council have contacted SCDC to arrange for the missing bins to be replaced as soon as possible.

All street furniture is in good condition.

The winged bus stop situated in the high street is due for cleaning on the 8th May

Cllr J Watson

Lead Councillor Green & Boundaries

HALLS

The key areas of current and future activity with respect to the Ploughman and Public Halls are summarised below:

The Ploughman Hall:



The imaginative conversion of underused space at the Ploughman Hall into a youth facility was finally completed for handover to the Willingham Youth Trust in October 2014. The forbearance and patience of parish staff during the disruption caused by the lengthy conversion process is gratefully acknowledged.

Willingham Youth Trust has negotiated and signed a ten year lease with the Parish Council to manage the youth facility.

Work complementing the internal conversion work has been separately commissioned. This has included cutting back the hedge fronting West Fen Road and the upgrading of security lighting adjacent to the entrance to the youth facility.

Completion of other internal work has been postponed until completion of the youth facility conversion and will now be actioned. This includes the review of the quality of the current Hall furniture with a view to replacing those items no longer fit for purpose, cleaning and re-sealing of the hall floor and decorating the Parish Office. A helpful survey of the electrical system in the Hall has been completed which has identified some areas for remediation.

Further landscaping works around the Hall car park will be completed in the coming year, undertaken in collaboration with members of the Willingham Action Group. The positioning of the current security camera provision will be reviewed and enhanced to allow improved surveillance of the new play equipment on the QE II Field, adjacent to the Ploughman Hall.

Hire of the Hall remains robust. A review of the hiring rates will take place in time for any adjustments to be introduced during Autumn 2015. The current signage for the Hall will be reviewed and enhancement considered.

The Public Hall:

The Public Hall Users Committee has negotiated and signed a ten year lease extension with the Parish Council, which will run until December 2024.

Minor internal work has been completed, including the replacement of an area of rotten floorboards on the ground floor. The source of the rot – a blocked air brick – has been identified and cleared.

Decoration of the Hall's remaining external window frames, following the successful renovation and re-decoration of the front facade of the Hall, will be commissioned.



Ray Croucher

Lead Councillor - Halls

CEMETERY

During September of last year, the council was alerted to the availability of a plot of land at the southern end of the village, that might be suitable for a new cemetery, and commissioned a surface water test, but the test indicated that the land would not be suitable for a cemetery, and therefore the enquiry was discontinued. The council will continue to search for suitable cemetery land.

Work was carried out in October to the cemetery wall at the lower end of church lane, to stabilise cracks in the wall.

Following complaints from various families who had grass cuttings left on grave memorial stones of their relatives, the council requested tenders for a new grass cutting contract, to include mowing around the new graves area, in preference to strimming, as had been done under the previous contract.

Tenders were received in January, and the contract was awarded to Henry Williams Grounds Maintenance. Their first cut went well with very few clippings left behind.



LEISURE AND AMENITIES

Recreation Ground



The past year we have worked hard to resolve issues with the flooding of the recreation ground with the Environment Agency. Following works carried out in early January the water level in the Lode have reduced significantly to allow the drainage pipes to be above water and allow the field to drain. We hope that this work will mean that the local clubs for football, cricket, hockey and bowls can continue to use the Recreation Ground on a regular

basis.

We do undertake regular maintenance work to the recreation ground including reseeding, fertilising and weed killing, I do believe that Willingham has an excellent open space for all the public to enjoy.

We also upgraded the floodlights to cost efficient LED's, this allows the football club to train during the winter months.

Pavilion

The Sports Pavilion is mainly used by the cricket and football clubs, it has 4 changing rooms and 2 referees rooms complete with shower facilities. Maintaining the sports pavilion is reasonably low cost, mainly replacing roof tiles. The pavilion does have a meeting room that can be used by anyone, more details can be obtained from the Clerk.

This year we installed a fully automatic defibrillator on the outside wall of the pavilion, this was fully funded by the Parish Council and provides lifesaving equipment to the village when required. We will look at installing another defibrillator following the news that additional funding will be made available.



QE11 Field

It's been a rollercoaster time with the project to enhance the QE11 playing field with new equipment that will be used by the whole community. Willingham Action Group in conjunction with the parish council have worked hard to secure funding from Amey Cespa, WREN and local businesses coupled together with the amazing contribution from the village following the It's a Knockout event means that phase 1 starts mid-May with completion by end of June. Once fully completed this new facility for the community will be one of the best in South Cambs!



COUNTY AND DISTRICT REPORTS

COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT 2015

The last ten months have been what one can only call a baptism of fire, being totally new to the complexities of local government and the daily issues that arise from supporting and representing our local residents. Although I am not quite sinking, just swimming forward in a stately fashion, where every new challenge brings both reward and frustration in equal measure. However, as time goes on I am finding my way with membership of the Audit and Accounts Committee, along with the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee with the Northstowe Parish, Residents Forums and Transport Group.

I have spent a lot of time chasing potholes with other highway issues and the problems with the new street lighting PFI, helping the Parish Council with the Meadow Road acquisition, possible new bus service to Ely, and numerous other requests from the council, clerk and residents. Also, I have taken on the challenge to reduce the speed limit approaching Willingham from Longstanton as the Parish Council has been asking for this for some years. The police are objecting, therefore site meetings have been held with speed assessment equipment (speed guns!). 98% of the targeted motorists were within the 40mph limit which quite impressed the police! The outcome is that the police still object to the new limit commencing at Manning's Fruit Farm but are looking at another possible start point, further meetings are to be held.

The issue of illegal grazing of horses is being dealt with by George Hay the Councils enforcer. At the time of writing this report the new legislation has yet to be promulgated and systems explained, but George and I are meeting to discuss the issue further. Money plays a big role here, it can cost up to £2,000 per horse to remove them from the highway, seven or eight and you are looking at around £16K. I was discussing this with a resident the other day, and they were outraged that such an amount is wasted on removing the horses when "other vital services are in need of funds".

I really am very appreciative of the large amount of personal correspondence I receive from our residents with requests for help on a number of issues, such as surface water flooding, location of temporary traffic lights, problems with school placements for their children to name but a few. I find this individual case work very rewarding, especially when common sense prevails, and working with parents manage to find a place at the correct school for their children. One of the most rewarding aspects of the last ten months has been helping low income families to take advantage of the free child care for two year olds. As with many government initiatives, very few, if any, were aware of this entitlement. I found one family by talking to a resident in a local pub, this in turn helped me to find more, and overall I managed to find around ten local families in Willingham who are now receiving this help along with a number of our neighbours in Longstanton and Over.

The County Council is facing unprecedented budgetary problems. Over thirty two million pounds had to be saved on this year's budget whilst still providing over thirty million pounds for new school buildings with little or no help from Central Government. Every year the grant from government is reduced and eventually there will be no grant at all with the County Council having to borrow a significant amount of money this year.

Even with the 1.9% council tax rise we are still one of the lowest in the country. We are committed to provide the required services to educate our children, look after the elderly and venerable with the extra responsibilities for health with the new Health and Social Care Act, on top of the other statutory services we have to provide to the whole of Cambridgeshire.

The library service is a case in point; with costs of 4.5 Million pounds per year to run the service. Elderly residents of the county are unable to reach main or smaller libraries that some villages are lucky enough to have. The mobile library is vital to provide these residents with this life supporting service. A review of the library service is underway with a proposal to turn the third floor of the Central Library in Cambridge into an Enterprise Centre. This would offer a range of opportunities for job seekers, learners and entrepreneurs, with events to improve skills and employability. It would also create a space for start-up businesses, individuals and mobile businesses to work, meet, and share ideas.

The Enterprise Centre will also provide an income to support the broader library services.

Key points are:

- The proposals are not a privatisation of the library;
- Only a proportion of the third floor of the library is changing from current uses (around 30%);
- Following some further work on space utilisation, we are able to maintain the number of desk spaces for students, etc., one of the major sources of concern from the public;
- Virtually all of the current stock at the library will be maintained (95%);
- The number of computer points and tablet kiosks in total will be increased;
- Popular elements of the library such as the children's section will be expanded.

The proposals will now be debated at the meeting on 2 June, where the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee will also hear feedback from the wider Cambridgeshire Libraries Review consultation, which was extended to run until the 10th May to allow full comments to be made on the Enterprise Centre proposals. In January, Councillors agreed a way forward for the whole service to look at ways to transform in order to make tough financial savings and respond to future trends. The library service needs to transform in order to make savings of more than £1.8million over the next three years. Local people are encouraged to help shape the future direction of the library service in Cambridgeshire by taking part in the consultation to give their views on priorities and the Council's suggested way forward – which includes the proposals for the enterprise centre.

Responses to the consultation survey will help inform more detailed proposals for the library service, which will be taken to the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee later in the summer. There will then be a second round of consultation.

Phase one of Northstowe is due to get underway, and whilst the phase two application was not agreed at the last NJDCC meeting it will be re-visited on Wednesday 29th July. The meeting is at South Cambs Hall and starts at 1000hrs. Members of the public are encouraged to attend, and register if they wish to speak.

I cannot report to the council without some mention of the B1050. This has been an issue for the past twenty five years. Section 106 monies from the Northstowe project cannot be spent on a by-pass as section 106 contributions have to be spent within the parish of the development. Therefore, all section 106 contributions will be spent on the facilities that a town the size of Northstowe will require. These facilities will also be available to neighbouring parishes. Weight restrictions and HGV bans cannot be applied as it is classed as a secondary route. However, I am trying to ascertain if perhaps a partial HGV ban/weight restriction can be imposed. Reduced speed limits are also a good idea, but they have to have the agreement of the police, and at the moment they are not being that co-operative due to fact that they will have to enforce them. My answer to that is that they have to enforce the present speed limits, so what makes this so different!!

There is no easy answer to this as this is not in the County Councils five year plan, and money is so very tight. However, I will keep trying to find some form of resolution, and keep the B1050 issue at the forefront of my discussions at Council.

County Councillor Peter Hudson

DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT 2015

In 2005 SCDC was in no overall control and the budget proposal was to raise Council Tax to £140 for a Band D house. That is equivalent to £180 today when Council Tax is actually £125. The Government Grant has also halved since then. To achieve this level, among the lowest in the whole country, has not been easy and there have been massive reductions in staff and big changes in working practice. The search for savings is still on-going and reductions in government funding look set to continue, we are assuming that there will be no government grant by 2019.

Because of this SCDC have entered into sharing arrangements with both Cambridge City and Huntingdon District Council to reduce costs yet further. So far we have started to share waste collections with Cambridge City, saving about £500 000 per year. The Building Control service will be shared with Huntingdon. Then Legal Services, Planning and IT between all three Councils. It has not been easy to integrate the different cultures and practices and there have been, and will be some teething problems. The long gap in black bin collections over Christmas will be looked at again. The three councils have very different planning services, integration will be difficult. The Right Hon Eric Pickles has said that the future for small District Councils is bleak. While South Cambs is not particularly small by working with the City and Huntingdon the population is nearly 450,000. That brings a massive economic clout because we are the most productive area in the UK per head of population.

SCDC have also set up a private housing company to buy and let houses which will bring income into the council. This is a commercial venture called Ermine Street Housing Ltd. It is outside of and separate from the Council Housing where the rents are set by the Government, who also take 75% of the proceeds when a Council House is sold. These rules do not apply to the company.

To help with the shortage of available housing in our villages SCDC are building Council Houses again and the company will be building affordable housing as well. The difference between Council Housing and Affordable is important as Council Houses have to be allocated on a points system but Affordable gives priority to local people. Affordable housing can be built on exception sites outside the village envelope reducing costs and providing housing for people of that parish who are on the waiting list.

The City Deal is a partnership between South Cambs, Cambridge City and the County Council. It is intended to provide more employment with an extra 1,000 affordable or key worker houses. The City Deal money should aid and sustain our economic growth by improving infrastructure and transport in our area, and by reducing congestion in Cambridge City. All are vitally important if the growth is to continue. To this end the Government is making £500 million available in three tranches between now and 2025. There will also be other funds from the three councils and from developers. The A14 scheme is already developed and is not part of the City Deal and a similar scheme proposed for the A428 will also be separate from it.

The City Deal will probably evolve into a Combined Authority; the Government expect this but have not yet passed the legislation to enable it to happen. A Combined Authority is just that, an amalgamation of council services but still separately elected councils. It is already happening in all the shared service arrangements entered into. It is not a Unitary Authority, there is little appetite for that among Government Minister but it does not prevent the Councils deciding to become one. To me the most important thing is ensuring that South Cambs continues as this attractive and rural area where people want to live.

Northstowe Phase 1 has started at long last and Phase 2 is working its way through the Joint Planning Committee. The last meeting was adjourned as there were still too many issues outstanding for Cllrs to grant planning permission. There will be a meeting in May and in June to sort out the last issues, then a meeting in July to finally decide whether to approve or refuse. It is important to get the best possible deal without making the scheme non-viable. There is a danger that the government could decide to take over the project by forming an Urban Development Corporation. There would be no local input or control any more, which is not good for the area or this Parish. It is likely that a UDC under the control of the Treasury would be far more interested in saving money and less in what was best for the District.

District Councillor Ray Manning

ACCOUNTS

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT – 31st March 2015

INCOME

Precept	£112,000.00	
Green & Boundaries	£123.97	
Leisure & Amenities	£2,960.00	
Halls	£29,576.75	
Cemetery	£4,124.00	
Establishments	£170.08	
Section 106	£12,362.00	
Interest Received	£122.04	
		<u>£161,438.84</u>

EXPENDITURE

Green & Boundaries	£2,050.37	
Leisure & Amenities	£12,946.19	
Halls	£91,893.64	
Cemetery	£5,437.01	
Establishments	£17,318.01	
Salaries	£33,001.71	
Insurance	£5,118.98	
<u>Section 106</u>		
Meadow Road	£51,721.00	
<u>Section 137</u>		
Piper Lifeline	£2,866.78	
Donations	£8,099.79	
		<u>£230,453.48</u>
INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE		<u><u>-£69,014.64</u></u>

(Full Accounts are available from the Parish Office and on the website)

GRANTS AWARDED DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS

Grants have been awarded to the following groups during the last 12 months:

Willingham Action Group
Willingham Youth Trust
Willingham Wolves
Willingham Library
Bowls Club
Over Day Centre

The Council also continue to provide free use of the Pavilion and Recreation Ground for the Youth Teams in the village as well as reduced charges for community and education groups using the Ploughman Hall. Local Groups also benefit from the reduced cost of using the Public Hall which is currently leased to the User Committee and at present is mainly used by the Scout Group.

PLANS FOR 2015/2016

QEII Field – Play Area

At the time of writing work has begun on long awaited new play facility on the QEII Field. Once completed, it is hoped that parishioners will access and enjoy this new facility for many years to come.

Meadow Road Woodland



The Council has purchased the lease for the land along Meadow Road and is intending along with WAG to turn this into a woodland area for all to visit in the future. Work has already started on the ground clearance so by this time next year hopefully the woodland will be starting to flourish

THE PARISH COUNCILLORS

Your current Parish Councillors and their contact details are:-

Mr A Cook	01954 260325
Dr R Croucher (Vice Chairman & Halls Lead Councillor)	01954 261113
Mr N Harris	01954 611226
Mr P King (Chairman)	01954 260780
Mr D Law (Planning Committee Chairman)	01954 202188
Mr R Manning	01954 261235
Mr S Mellows (Cemetery Lead Councillor)	01954 270063
Mr A Slater	01954 261455
Mr J Smith (L&A Lead Councillor)	01954 261141
Mr J Watson (Green & Boundaries Lead Councillor)	01954 200245
Mrs Joanne Vincent-Pilsworth	01954 260929

The Council currently have Four councillor vacancies. Anyone interested in finding out more about the role should contact any of the above councilors or the clerk for an informal chat.

Clerk: Mrs Mandy Powell, Parish Council Office, Ploughman Hall, West Fen Road, Willingham CB24 5LP Tel: 01954 261027

email: email@willinghampc.org.uk

Other contacts: District Councillor: Ray Manning

County Councillor: Peter Hudson